℠. Although modern scholars generally hold Dharma to be the collective mores of the ancient Indian social structure, we find that the Rāmāyaṇ describes Dharma as the total potential of Natural Law, which includes the innumerable Laws of Nature that promote individual and social progress. Furthermore, the Rāmāyaṇ supports Maharishi's teaching that life in accord with Natural Law is attained through the unfoldment of the total potential of human life. This paper also shows how the Rāmāyaṇ depicts its central hero, Rām, as the embodiment of Dharma, supporting and upholding the progress of every aspect of the universe from the transcendental level. The Administration of Rām thus portrays an ideal civilization, in which every citizen lives a fulfilled and prosperous life in full accord with all the laws of Nature. This ideal life is available to every society through the technologies of Maharishi Vedic Science℠.

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Introduction

Over the past 38 years His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has reformulated the ancient Vedic wisdom of life into a complete science of consciousness, his Vedic Science and Technology. In doing so, Maharishi has demonstrated that the literature of the Vedic Tradition is not the work of different authors in various historical periods; rather it is the precise description of the unified source of Nature's orderliness, a self-interacting field of pure consciousness—pure wakefulness—that is the managing intelligence of the universe. Maharishi describes this field as the most fundamental level of Natural Law, for all of the diverse Laws of Nature that give rise to and structure the vast material universe find their home within this unified field of intelligence. In addition, Maharishi has brought to light practical procedures from the Vedic Tradition that enable anyone to directly experience and unfold this most fundamental and powerful level of Natural Law in their own awareness. This he explains as the ultimate achievement, the blossoming of the total potential of human life in higher states of consciousness.

Maharishi's comments on the Vedic Literature, both in his writing as well as in many thousands of hours of lectures, have provided scholars and students with profound insights into the Vedic Literature as the theoretical and practical textbooks of consciousness. While Maharishi has not commented upon every verse and *sūtra* in this vast body of literature, he nonetheless has provided sufficient understanding of its pervading themes. This paper will illustrate how Maharishi's comments on the Vedic Literature and his exposition of Natural Law can be used to show how the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇ[1] unfolds one of its key themes, the nature and practical application of *Dharma*.

Dharma is a concept of singular importance throughout the Rāmāyaṇ, for virtually all behavior within the narrative is evaluated in terms of conformity or lack of conformity to it. Modern scholars view *Dharma* as a collection of loosely codified behavioral codes deeply rooted in the culture of ancient India and handed down from generation to generation. However, Maharishi provides a more profound understanding in his commentary on another aspect of the Vedic Literature, the Bhagavad-Gītā. In Maharishi's commentary, *Dharma* on its most fundamental level is the total potential of Natural Law, the managing intelligence of the entire universe; on a more expressed level it represents the Laws of Nature that uphold the evolution of all life throughout creation. When behavior is in accord with these Laws of Nature, then it is right behavior—evolutionary for both the individual and society. Maharishi explains, however, that it is not necessary to understand every Law of Nature; rather, one can learn to live spontaneously in accord with Natural Law through the technologies of his Vedic Science℠.

In the following pages we will examine several verses from the Rāmāyaṇ that support Maharishi's interpretation, an elucidation that will better enable us to understand the role of *Dharma* in the Rāmāyaṇ, and indeed throughout the Vedic Literature. These verses will also show how the Rāmāyaṇ provides a practical philosophy for unfolding what Maharishi terms the "fruit of all knowledge," a mistake-free life in perfect accord with Natural Law for every individual and every society.

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[1]We have decided to adopt the convention of transliteration used by Maharishi in his *Absolute Theory of Government: Automation in Administration*, which enables those without formal Sanskrit training to more accurately pronounce the Sanskrit expressions.

The Rāmāyaṇ in the Context of the Vedic Literature

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇ has long held a special place in the hearts and minds of the people of India. It tells the story of Rām, the great and noble prince of ancient Ayodhyā, who, as the result of a deceitful plan to undermine his sovereignty, was banished to the forest for fourteen years with his illustrious wife Sītā. The story of Rām's adventures in the forest, his victory over the evil Rāvaṇ, his triumphant return to Ayodhyā, and the ideal civilization under his rule, have been a source of inspiration to millions of individuals through the ages.

While the narrative has been a delight to so many, Maharishi emphasizes the Rāmāyaṇ's deeper value in its relationship to the whole Vedic Literature. He explains that the Vedic Literature is much more than a collection of books on a variety of topics; it is the expression of the most fundamental level of Nature's functioning, the self-interacting dynamics of a Unified Field of Pure Consciousness. Maharishi's insight is that the entire universe—including all of the diverse Laws of Nature that give rise to and administer every aspect of individual and cosmic life—is the expression of an unbounded field of pure intelligence. He describes this field as self-referral consciousness,[2] a field of wakefulness, the omnipresent, essential constituent of creation lying beyond time, space, and causation: "Consciousness is wakefulness, unbounded alertness, pure intelligence, pure existence, self-referral fullness, all knowingness—the self-sufficient and unmanifest source, course, and goal of all creation."[3]

Maharishi describes the different aspects of creation as ripples and waves in this vast ocean of life.[4] He explains that within this field of wakefulness, all the activities of life are created, controlled, and administered. Maharishi refers to self-referral consciousness as the "total potential of Natural Law," for it is the source of each of the infinite number of Laws of Nature that manage every aspect of life: "All the laws governing different fields of excitation in Nature, all the innumerable laws known to all the sciences have their common source in this field of absolute organizing power." [5]

Maharishi explains that through its own self-interacting dynamics self-referral consciousness expresses itself as the diversified forms and phenomena in creation. In assuming the role of material universe, it moves within itself, creating a dynamic structure within its eternal silence. This structure is termed *shruti,* which Maharishi describes as "vibrancy of intelligence in the form of sound generated by the self-referral dynamics of consciousness—those specific sounds that construct self-referral consciousness."[6] These sounds are the Vedic Literature on its most fundamental level, and it is their phonetic record that is found in the Vedic Texts. Maharishi points out that *shruti* is "the sounds that are available to us in the Veda[7] and Vedic Literature. Through proper use of these sounds,

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[2]Maharishi explains that it is self-referral because it is eternally self-knowing and self-sufficient—it has no reference to anything outside itself.

[3]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi Forum of Natural Law and National Law for Doctors*, India: Maharishi Vedic University, 1995, p. 24.

[4]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, Los Angeles: SRM Publications, 1967, p. 31.

[5]Ibid., p. 75.

[6]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government: Automation in Administration*, India: Maharishi Prakashan, 1995, p. 352.

[7]Veda means pure knowledge, complete knowledge. It refers to the structure and function of self-referral consciousness, including its infinite organizing power.

the entire Vedic Technology—the whole engineering of creation, all the secrets of Nature's silent functioning—is available to us."[8]

Tony Nader, M.D., Ph.D., working closely with Maharishi, has recently discovered that these sounds, available in the Vedic Literature as its *sūtra* and verses, are also the fundamental basis and essential ingredient of the human physiology. He has documented a precise correlation between the 40 aspects of the Vedic Literature and the human physiology,[9] finding that there is an exact correspondence between the structure and function of the human physiology and the structure and function of the self-interacting dynamics of self-referral consciousness.

Thus we find in this description the basis for the Rāmāyaṇ's reliability as a guide for proper living and proper behavior. The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇ is not the fabrication of an ancient author, nor some poetic fancy, but is the expression of fundamental dynamics of Nature's functioning. While we will be examining principles brought out in the narrative—the most expressed value of the text—these principles are the expressions of the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness, and are thus fully in accord with the most fundamental level of Natural Law.

The Availability of Self-Referral Consciousness

In order to appreciate the practical significance of *Dharma* in the Rāmāyaṇ, we must examine a critical feature of Maharishi's Vedic Science: the availability of self-referral consciousness to human awareness. Through the technologies of Maharishi Vedic Science, principally the Transcendental Meditation® and TM-Sidhi® programs, any individual can directly experience self-referral consciousness and use it to improve all facets of life. During the Transcendental Meditation technique, Maharishi explains, the mind effortlessly settles to its least excited level, a state of inner wakefulness, the Self:

> My Transcendental Meditation is a simple, natural, effortless procedure whereby the mind easily and naturally arrives at the source of thought, the settled state of mind—Transcendental Consciousness—pure consciousness, self-referral consciousness, which is the source of all creative processes.[10]

In the Vedic Language, self-referral consciousness is known as *Ātmā*. *Ātmā* is the simplest form of human awareness, but it is also the same self-referral consciousness that is the managing intelligence of the universe, the home of all the Laws of Nature. Thus, the most fundamental level of Nature's functioning can be located when the conscious mind identifies itself with its simplest state. The value of directly experiencing *Ātmā* has been documented in more than 500 scientific studies conducted at over 200 universities and research institutions in 30 countries.

The Transcendental Meditation Sidhi program is an advanced technology of Maharishi Vedic Science that trains an individual to think and act from the level of self-referral consciousness.[11] Its practice unfolds the capacity to produce different phenomena from that

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[8]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government: Automation in Administration*, India: Maharishi Prakashan, 1995, p. 352.

[9]see Tony Nader, *Human Physiology—Expression of Veda and the Vedic Literature*, Vlodrop, The Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1995.

[10]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government,* p. 280.

[11]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Vedic Knowledge for Everyone*, Holland: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1994, p. 260–262.

level, including a wide variety of abilities. These include the enhancement of such human virtues as love and compassion, and even "Yogic Flying," the ability to move through the air by mere intention. Practitioners of Yogic Flying experience "bubbling bliss" in their performance, and from their experience of self-referral consciousness they create a powerful influence of harmony in the environment and in the world.[12]

That individuals can identify themselves with the total potential of Natural Law is a startling concept, for the western scientific tradition studies the laws of nature as objective phenomena. Significantly, the ultimate goal of the technologies of Maharishi Vedic Science is not to enjoy self-referral consciousness simply for the experience, but rather to enliven it permanently in the awareness. As we shall later see, the regular experience of self-referral consciousness cultures the mind to spontaneously think and act from the deepest level of life, and thus act in perfect accord with Natural Law.

In the following section we will begin analyzing selected verses from the Rāmāyaṇ in the light of the principles of Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology. Before we begin, however, it is important to indicate a preference of text. While the Critical Edition of Bhaṭṭ and Shah[13] is the choice of most modern scholars, Maharishi's interpretation of the Vedic Literature as the precise expressions of the structuring dynamics of self-referral consciousness raises many questions about the Critical Edition's merit. It further questions the validity of applying contemporary critical practices that do not rely on the direct experience of *shruti*—the unmanifest sounds of the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness—to the creation of critical editions of the Vedic Literature.[14] While western philological methodology may be appropriate for ordinary literary works, for the Vedic Literature such approaches are excessively speculative. Hence, we have chosen an edition of the traditional southern recension that has been compiled from reputable manuscripts.[15] While this choice may raise text-critical issues that cannot be resolved within the limits of this paper, those who prefer the Critical Edition will note that many of the passages cited below have been accepted by its editors.

The Principle of Dharma

Dharma is a technical term found throughout the Vedic Literature that bears special import in the Rāmāyaṇ. Many lengthy passages in the Rāmāyaṇ concern themselves specifically with its application, and indeed the hero Rām is described as साक्षाद्धर्ममिवापरम् *sākṣād Dharmam ivāparam* ("the personification of *Dharma").*[16] While the ancient commentators of the Rāmāyaṇ, as well as some modern scholars, have attempted to unravel the seeming complexities of *Dharma*,[17] translators have tended to represent it as a set of arbitrary and inconsistent societal conventions developed by ancient ancestors and passed

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[12]see Paul Gelderloos and Wim van den Berg, "Maharishi's TM-Sidhi program: Participating in the Infinite Creativity of Nature to Enliven the Totality of the Cosmic Psyche in All Aspects of Life," *Modern Acience and Vedic Science* 2(4), 1989, pp. 324-371.

[13]G.H. Bhaṭṭ and U.P. Shah, U.P. (general editors). *The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: Critical Edition*, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1975.

[14]For a more in-depth examination of the Critical Edition in light of the principles of Maharishs Vedic Science and Technology, see William F. Sands, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* diss. Maharishi International University, 1994.

[15]R. Narayanaswami Aiyar, *Śrīmadvālmīkirāmāyaṇam*, Mylapore, Madras: M.L.J. Press, 1958.

[16]Uttara Kāṇda, 101.17.

[17]Benjamin Khan, *The Concept of Dharma in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1965.

from generation to generation.[18]

Dharma is often translated simply as "righteousness," "law," "duty," or the like. While such renderings are often appropriate, we will see in the following verses that in some contexts such a translation is incomplete or inadequate. For example, in the following verse Rām's wife Sītā ascribes to *Dharma* something more than duty or righteousness:

> धर्मादर्थः प्रभवते धर्मात्प्रभवते सुखम्
> धर्मेण लभते सर्वं धर्मसारमिदं जगत्
>
> *Dharmād arthaḥ prabhavate Dharmāt prabhavate*
> *sukham Dharmeṇa labhate sarvaṁ Dharmasāram*
> *idaṁ jagat*
>
> —3.9.30
>
> *Wealth arises from Dharma, happiness emerges*
> *from Dharma. Everything is obtained by means of*
> *Dharma, for the world has Dharma as its essence.*

In this passage, *Dharma* as a purely human convention inadequately explains *Dharmasāra,* literally "has *Dharma* as its essence." Shastri,[19] like many translators, correctly assesses the significance of *sāra* ("constituting its very marrow"), but his translation of *Dharma* as "duty" leaves the reader at a loss to understand how the world could have duty as its essence ("the whole world [has] duty constituting its very marrow").[20] While *jagat* ("world") can justifiably be taken as "society" or "mankind"—suggesting that society has righteousness or duty at its basis[21]—the inclusion of *idam* ("this")[22] along with *jagat* ("world") suggests the physical world and thus works against Shastri's reading.

It is difficult to interpret *Dharma* as the fundamental constituent of the world if one insists on it exclusively as a social code such as "righteousness" or "duty." It nonetheless fits perfectly with Maharishi's description:

> *Dharma* is that invincible power of Nature which upholds existence. It maintains evolution and forms the very basis of cosmic life. It supports all that is helpful for evolution and discourages all that is opposed to it.[23]

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[18]Robert J. Goldman, ed. and trans., *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, *Volume I, Bālakāṇḍa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 53.

[19]Hari Prasad Shastri, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, London, England: Shanti Sadan, 1985, Vol. II, p. 20.

[20]The Mahābhāra gives a similar description of the relationship between *Dharma* and the world:

> धर्ममूलं जगद्राजन्नान्यद्धर्माद्विशिष्यते
>
> *Dharmamūlaṁ jagad rājan nānyad dharmād*
> *vishishyate*
>
> —3.33.48
>
> *The world has Dharma as its source, O King.*
> *There is nothing higher than Dharma.*

ref. Pandit Ramachandrashastri Kinjawadekar, ed., *The Mahābhāratam with the Bharata Bhawadeepa Commentary of Nīkilaṇṭha*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1979.

[21]Monier Williams, *Sanskrit/English Dictionary*, Delhi: Motitlal Banarsidass, 1984, p. 1208.

[22]*Idam* generally designates something concrete near the speaker, but often refers inclusively to the entire material creation.

[23]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary Chapters 1-6*, Baltimore: Penguin, 1969, p. 26.

In this definition, Maharishi describes *Dharma* as the foundation of life, thus equating it with the most fundamental level of Nature's administration, the abstract, unmanifest ruler of the ever-expanding universe.[24] *Dharma* is "that which upholds the universe,"[25] the indomitable force that advances all that is good in life, and which "promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom."[26] Hence, it is synonymous with Natural Law.[27] In this passage Maharishi also speaks of *Dharma* as maintaining evolution, though not in the Darwinian sense of the term; rather he is citing the fundamental dynamics which advance life naturally to its supreme value, the unfoldment of higher levels of human development. In the following, he discusses Natural Law, or *Dharma,* in this evolutionary role:

> The purpose of Natural Law is to evolve life to perfection, to take life to its source, which is the absolute, non-changing field of all possibilities. Even though each law has its own specific level of performance and activity, the responsibility of that law, seen in the sequence of all the Laws of Nature, is found to be in the direction of evolution towards more and more.[28]

In Maharishi's view, the fulfillment of *Dharma* is perfection, achieved in higher states of consciousness—higher levels of human awareness in which an individual is completely awake to the unbounded value of life. In higher states of consciousness, one is fully and permanently established in self-referral consciousness and enjoys complete freedom, perfect fulfillment, and a mistake-free life in accord with Natural Law. Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology identifies four higher states of consciousness, including Transcendental Consciousness—pure, self-referral consciousness—and three hierarchically structured states in which self-referral consciousness is maintained along with waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.[29] In Maharishi's analysis, these higher levels of consciousness are the goal of human evolution, and it is toward them that the Laws of Nature guide every individual.

Maharishi's interpretation of *Dharma* as the upholder of the universe does not preclude the different social customs and norms of behavior; however, it does place them in a larger perspective. Since *Dharma* sustains the evolution of the entire cosmos, its application is found in every aspect of life and, in turn, in every level of society including individual, family, and nation. Maharishi explains:

> *'Dharmas',* the plural of *Dharma,* signifies the different powers of Nature upholding different avenues of the way of evolution. They take expression as specific modes of activity or different ways of righteousness, which keep the whole stream of life in harmony—every aspect of life being properly balanced with every other aspect—and moving in the direction of evolution.[30]

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[24]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, pp. 36–37.

[25]Ibid., p. 30.

[26]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 26–27.

[27]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, pp. 36–37.

[28]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Science, Consciousness and Ageing: Proceedings of the International Conference*, West Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press, 1980, p. 75.

[29]These three states are: Cosmic Consciousness, in which an individual experiences the full range of self-referral consciousness along with waking state, dreaming state, and deep sleep; God Consciousness, which includes the experience of self-referral consciousness along with the ability to appreciate the finest level of creation; and Unity Consciousness, in which one not only experiences self-referral consciousness as the ultimate reality of oneself, but also of all objective phenomena. For a more complete description of Maharishi's vision of higher states of consciousness, see Charles Alexander and Robert Boyer, "Seven States of Consciousness: Unfolding the Full Potential of the Cosmic Psyche in Individual Life through Maharishi's Vedic Psychology," *Modern Science and Vedic Science*, 2(4), 1989, pp. 324–371.

[30]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 64.

As we can see, Maharishi holds that the individual *"Dharmas"* are not based on human conventions, but are specific Laws of Nature that sustain individual growth and progress. Therefore, translating *Dharma* as "righteousness" in some contexts may be acceptable, provided the reader understands righteousness as behavior that is in accord with Natural Law, and not dependent upon social custom.

If the previous verse from the Rāmāyaṇ (3.9.30) were an isolated example, without adequate manuscript support, one might be tempted to accept the conventional interpretation of *Dharma*. However, the following verse also places *Dharma* beyond human convention. In a discussion with the hero Hanuman, Lord Rām equates *Dharma* with *Ātmā*, located within the heart and mind of every individual:

सूक्ष्मः परमदुर्ज्ञेयः सतां धर्मः प्लवंगम
हृदिस्थः सर्वभूतानामात्मा वेद शुभाशुभम्

Sukshmaḥ paramadurgyeyaḥ satāṁ Dharmaḥ plavaṁ-
gama hṛidisthaḥ sarvabhūtānām Ātmā veda shubhāshubham

—4.18.15

The Dharma of the righteous is subtle and extremely difficult to know,[31] *O Monkey; established in the heart it is the Self of all creatures. It (Dharma) knows what is righteous and unrighteous.*

"The *Dharma* of the righteous is subtle and extremely difficult to know" may appear to denote its intellectual obscurity; in fact, many discussions throughout the Rāmāyaṇ suggest as much. But Rām extends the meaning of *Dharma* and explains why it is difficult to know by equating it with *Ātmā* ("the Self"), which he locates at the most fundamental level of animate life (*hṛidisthaḥ sarvabhūtānām*, "established in the heart of all creatures"). He further declares that *Ātmā* "knows what is righteous or unrighteous" (*veda shubhāshubham*), thus asserting that while an individual may not always intellectually understand what is *dharmic (shubha,* in accord with *Dharma)* or *adharmic (ashubha,* in violation of *Dharma*), right and wrong is spontaneously determined on the universal level of *Ātmā*. Consequently, to understand *Dharma* one must know *Ātmā,* for *Ātmā* is the total potential of Natural Law, and on the level of *Ātmā* right action is computed. In this interpretation, *Dharma* clearly cannot be a mere product of society.

Support for the interpretation of *Dharma* as the total potential of Natural Law comes from an unlikely source. Rām's stepmother Kaikeyī, the perpetrator of his exile, states:

ऋाहुः सत्यं हि परमं धर्मं धर्मविदो जनाः

Āhuḥ satyaṁ hi paramaṁ Dharmaṁ
Dharmavido janāḥ —2.14.3

The people who are the knowers of Dharma, say that satya is the supreme Dharma.

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[31]This point is also brought out in the Mahābhārat (2.67.38):

धर्मश्च सूक्ष्मो निपुलोपलक्ष्यः

Dharmashcha sūkshmo nipulopalakshyaḥ
And Dharma is subtle, perceived only by the enlightened.

The most common translation of *satya* is "truth," which would enable this verse to express truth as the supreme *(parama) Dharma*. Maharishi, however, adds a more profound understanding to *satya*: it is "that which never changes,"[32] immortal, non-changing pure consciousness. This interpretation of *satya* represents the most fundamental understanding of truth, for fully awake self-referral consciousness is its very definition; it is the source of all that is, was, or will ever be, and the whole field of diversity is found as an expression of its structure. In recent years, Maharishi often expresses this interpretation by translating *satya* as "absolute alertness,"[33] referring to fully awake self-referral consciousness. This translation does not replace "truth" but rather adds an additional, more profound, understanding.[34] Applying Maharishi's interpretation to the above verse (2.14.3) enables us to translate it as:

> *The people who are the knowers of Dharma,*
> *say that the supreme Dharma is absolute*
> *alertness, the Self.*
>
> —2.14.3

The equation of *Dharma* with absolute alertness reinforces the interpretation of *Dharma* as the total potential of Natural Law. This reading hinges upon the understanding of *satya* as absolute alertness, which Kaikeyī supports with a subsequent definition:

> सत्यमेकपदं ब्रह्म सत्ये धर्मः प्रतिष्ठितः
>
> *Satyam ekapadaṁ Brahm satye Dharmaḥ*
> *pratishthitaḥ*
>
> —2.14.7
>
> *Satya is the single syllable (the pranava), it is*
> *Brahman; Dharma is established in satya.*

The sequence of expressions here is highly significant. Kaikeyī first defines *satya* as the transcendental reality by equating it with *Brahman* (fully awake self-referral conscious-

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[32]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Patanjali and the Eight Limbs of Yoga* [Videotaped Lecture, 18, August, 1971, Humboldt State College, Arcata, CA].

[33]Maharishi Vedic University, *Maharishi Vedic University Exhibition*, The Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1993, p. 199.

[34]Maharishi's interpretation is consistent with both *satya's* etymology as well as with other occurrences in the Vedic Literature. *Satya* is derived from *sat*, the *vartamāne kṛidanta* (present participle) of *as* ("to be" or "to exist"). The suffix *ya* makes it "existence", or "Being", terms that Maharishi has employed to describe pure self-referral consciousness, 1966. The following verse from the Yoga Vasishṭha, a text of the Vedic Literature, describes *satya* as the supreme reality of life:

> यस्मिन्सर्वं यस्य सर्वं यतः सर्वं यस्मादिदम्
> येन सर्वं यद्धि सर्वं तत्सत्यं समुपास्महे
>
> *Yasmin sarvaṁ yasya sarvaṁ yataḥ sarvam*
> *yasmādidam yena sarvaṁ yaddhi sarvaṁ tat-*
> *satyam samupāsmahe*
>
> *We are dedicated to that which is absolute*
> *alertness, in which everything exists, to which*
> *everything belongs, from which everything*
> *has emerged, by which everything is sus-*
> *tained, and which indeed is everything.*
>
> *—Yoga Vasishṭha, Upashāma Prakāraṇa 8.12*

This translation employs Maharishi's rendering of *satya* as "absolute alertness," permitting a more plausible interpretation of the verse than would "truth." Otherwise, one is left with truth as the entity in which everything is established, from which everything emerges, etc., a clearly inadequate notion. While "truth" may suffice for *satya* in many contexts, clearly *satya* often requires a deeper understanding which Maharishi's translation as "absolute alertness" supplies.

ness).[35] Secondly, she asserts that *Dharma* (here the individual *Dharmas)* is rooted in this self-referral field. If only the second *pāda* were available (*satye Dharmaḥ pratishthitaḥ "Dharma* is established in *satya"),* the conventional interpretation of *satya* as truth would be adequate, for one could justifiably argue that righteousness is rooted in truth. But the initial equation of *satya* with *Brahman* makes this reading unsatisfactory; rather, it suggests that the individual *Dharmas* are in fact established in *Brahman*.

Rām accords *satya* the status of ruler—and in Maharishi Vedic Science the ruler of the world is the managing intelligence of the universe—while describing the source of *Dharma* as absolute alertness:

सत्यमेवेश्वरो लोके सत्ये धर्मः सदाश्रितः
सत्यमूलानि सर्वानि सत्यान्नास्ति परं पदम्

Satyam eveshvaro loke satye Dharmaḥ sadāshritaḥ
satyamūlāni sarvāni satyān nāsti paraṁ padam

Absolute alertness alone is the ruler in the world;
Dharma is ever established in absolute alertness.
All things have their source in absolute alertness,
there is no higher state than absolute alertness.
—2.109.13

Here again the conventional sense of truth is an inadequate translation of *satya,* for not only is *Dharma* (the individual *Dharmas)* said to be ever established in *satya* (*satye Dharmaḥ sadāshritaḥ*), but all things have their source in *satya* (*satyamūlāni sarvāni*). "Absolute alertness," then, is clearly preferable—particularly in the second expression—for there is little justification for suggesting that the prevalent sense of truth is the source of the material creation.

The first expression of the verse is also significant, for it calls *satya* the Lord (or ruler) *in* the world. This expression again suggests self-referral consciousness, for in Maharishi Vedic Science self-referral consciousness not only creates and administers the universe, but is also found within every grain. The final expression *satyān nāsti paraṁ padam* ("there is no higher state than absolute alertness") appears to confirm *satya* as absolute alertness, the administrator permeating every aspect of creation.

From the above selection of verses, we can conclude that the term *Dharma,* as found in the Rāmāyaṇ, not only describes specific evolutionary activities, but also the total potential of Natural Law. In the following section, we will examine the relationship between *Dharma* and individual life by showing how the Rāmāyaṇ reveals the technique for spontaneously living in accord with *Dharma*.

Enlivening *Dharma* in Individual Life

Throughout the Rāmāyaṇ, the reader is continually faced with the complexity of *Dharma*. In addition to its holistic perspective discussed above, the Rāmāyaṇ also presents

[35]Maharishi explains the nature of *Brahman* in his commentary on the following expression from the Aitareya Upanishad (3.1.3): प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म—*Pragyānaṁ Brahma*—Fully awake self-referral dynamism (of the universe) born of the infinite organizing power of pure knowledge, the Veda—fully awake totality of the individual consciousness is *Brahm,* which comprehends the infinite dynamism of the universe in the infinite silence of the Self. (Maharishi Vedic University, *Maharishi Vedic University Exhibition*, The Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1993, p. 123)

individual actions—both *dharmic* and *adharmic*—often perplexing to the characters in the story as well as to the modern reader who tries to predict appropriate courses of action. For example, when hearing of Rām's intention to comply with his exile, his mother Kausalyā argues that his duty *(Dharma)* lies in serving her. Rām counters by citing a higher *Dharma*—the need to fulfill his father's command.[36] In this simple example we see two contradictory expressions of behavior, both apparently in accord with *Dharma,* and yet it is difficult to discern the one most correct or *dharmic*.

The dilemma of how to act correctly is, of course, a central problem in cultures of every era of human history. Maharishi, speaking to this concern, notes that correct behavior is action in accord with all the Laws of Nature, but because there are so many laws it is impossible to know them all, and thus what constitutes right action in every context. However, he provides a practical and effortless solution for ensuring right action. Speaking in the context of management, Maharishi explains:

> It is not possible to have the knowledge of all the systems and all the laws that govern different fields of management, and without the knowledge of the laws that govern different aspects of the life of the individual, or national or international life, it is not possible to become a perfect manager. Therefore, it is very necessary to find a way so that even without the knowledge of all these innumerable laws that govern different areas of creation and evolution, the trained manager should be able to manage any field of management that he undertakes to manage from the basis of all the Laws of Nature, like a gardener who manages the whole tree by simply handling the root.
>
> To develop this quality of management it is necessary to gain the ability to handle the whole field of management from the fundamental of management—self-referral consciousness—WHOLENESS.[37]

Maharishi here illustrates that to act in accord with Natural Law one must learn to function from the transcendental field of pure consciousness. By regularly experiencing self-referral consciousness one cultures the ability to spontaneously maintain the awareness on that level and operate from it. As the total potential of Natural Law becomes lively in the awareness, the ability to think and act in accord with the Laws of Nature spontaneously grows:[38]

> Vedic Science takes the human awareness to its simplest state. In its self-referral state it enlivens the total potential of natural law. When the total potential of natural law is enlivened in human awareness this makes a man spontaneously act according to natural law. [39]

To fully understand how we can engage the support of Nature we may recall Maharishi's point that the total potential of Natural Law is not an entity that lies outside oneself; it is

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[36]R. Narayanaswami Aiyar, 2.21.45 ff.

[37]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi University of Management: Wholeness on the move*, India: Maharishi Prakashan, 1995, pp. 94-95.

[38]This point is brought out very beautifully by Maharishi in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā. Maharishi explains that the conflict of Arjuna lies in his inability to determine whether to follow his family Dharma or his warrior Dharma, which in the circumstances of the narrative appear to conflict. While many significant principles about Dharma come out of the ensuing verses, the principal method of resolving Arjuna's dilemma is Lord Kṛiṣhṇa's instruction to transcend, and having become established in pure consciousness to act spontaneously in accord with Natural Law (see Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch.II, v. 45 & v. 48).

[39]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. *Maharishi's Master Plan to Create Heaven on Earth.* Washington, DC: Age of Enlightenment Press, 1988.

the simplest form of our own awareness. Thus, when we establish our awareness permanently on that level, we *are* the total potential of Natural Law, and every action we take is a reflection of this reality. Maharishi's use of the word *spontaneously* is especially important for it underscores his point that life in accord with Natural Law is not the result of intellectual analysis; rather, one established in a higher state of consciousness effortlessly and naturally functions in accord with the Laws of Nature, without necessarily understanding the individual laws involved. The result is a life free of mistakes, without stress or strain, in which all desires are spontaneously fulfilled.

A compelling element of Maharishi's vision of Natural Law is the absence of a systematic code of conduct. While most societies necessarily rely on codes of behavior, either as customs or formally documented rules, Maharishi explains that life in accord with Natural Law arises from the direct experience of the total potential of Natural Law, and not from compliance with a specified set of "do's and don'ts." It is significant that this holistic approach can eliminate the need for codified standards of behavior, for it provides the means for every individual to spontaneously act in an appropriate and socially acceptable manner, whatever rules are applicable to the circumstances.

This understanding of action in accord with Natural Law helps make sense of several important verses in the Rāmāyaṇ. While the Rāmāyaṇ's heroes often engage in lengthy discussions regarding the "correctness" of their actions, the text also provides examples of life in accord with Natural Law based on the development of full potential. For example, while in the forest Sītā comments to Rām:

आत्मानं नियमैस्तैस्तैः कर्षयित्वा प्रयत्नतः
प्राप्यते निपुणैर्धर्मो न सुखाल्लभते सुखम्

Ātmānaṁ niyamais tais taiḥ karshayitvā prayatnataḥ
prāpyate nipuṇair Dharmo na sukhāl labhate sukham

Let us first examine Sheldon Pollock's[40] translation, a representative modern interpretation:

> *But righteousness belongs only to the vigilant, those who relentlessly control themselves by various acts of self-restraint. No, true happiness is not easily won.*
> —3.9.31

Pollock's translation emphasizes that righteousness (life in accord with *Dharma)* results from "various acts of self-restraint" (*niyamais*), and though we will shortly disagree with the element of control that his translation implies, he nonetheless brings out an important point: in the view of the Rāmāyaṇ, righteousness is not developed through intellectual analysis but through self-development. In other words, the consideration of right and wrong is not enough, for there are too many variables for any individual to comprehend. The "vigilant" acquire spontaneous right action through the development of their potential.

Maharishi's interpretation of *niyam* (the root from which *niyamais* is derived), moreover, presents a more profound understanding of this verse. In his commentary on the

[40]Sheldon I. Pollock, trans. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India, Vol. 3 Araṇyakāṇḍa*, ed. Robert Goldman, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bhagavad-Gītā, Maharishi translates *niyamya*—the gerundive form of *niyam*—as:

> literally having introduced law and order, having organized something to function in an orderly manner. Even the word 'organize' is inadequate to convey the accurate meaning, but it has been chosen to avoid the sense of control and restraint which has generally been implied by commentators and which has only resulted in mutilating the whole meaning and purpose of the teaching.[41]

Maharishi elaborates in his commentary on a later verse (6.26), in which he translates *niyamya* as "having withdrawn," indicating that the mind has withdrawn from the world of the senses. Hence, the awareness has "turned back to the Self"[42] which, as we have seen, is the most orderly state of life and the source of Nature's orderliness.

Maharishi's commentary enables us to highlight a subtle and yet profound understanding of this verse. According to Pollock's translation, the vigilant learned to live in accord with *Dharma* through self-control, but the application of Maharishi's interpretation of *niyam* depicts the ability to live in accord with *Dharma* through the regular experience of *Ātmā,* the Self. In this light we may now read the first part of 3.9.31 as follows:

> *Dharma is obtained by the wise,[43] drawing the Self*
> *out by continually turning back to the Self.*

"Drawing the Self out" (*Atmānam karshayitvā*) refers to the growing ability to maintain self-referral consciousness in activity, outside the inner experience of the Self. Maharishi has pointed out that the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique naturally cultures the nervous system through the regular alternation of the experience of self-referral consciousness and activity, so that both mind and body become increasingly capable of supporting self-referral consciousness along with waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. This verse expresses the need for repeated experience of self-referral consciousness by stating that the wise draw the Self out "by continually (*tais taiḥ . . . prayatnataḥ*) turning back to the Self (*niyamais*)." Accordingly, the verse implies that the wise obtain *Dharma* not through intellectual analysis, legal discussion, or ethical codes, but by establishing the total potential of Natural Law in their awareness.

In the same vein, the ancient *Ṛishis* are said to have secured *Dharma* in their lives through *tapas* (and, by implication, not through intellectual analysis):

> तपसा भावितात्मानो धर्मस्यानुग्रहे रताः
>
> *Tapasā bhāvitātmāno Dharmasyānugrahe ratāḥ*
>
> *Intent on the acquisition of Dharma, they have purified themselves by tapas.*
>
> —6.35.18

Tapas is a technical term that refers to procedures and methods of purification for unfolding perfection in human life.[44] It is usually translated as "austerity," the presumption being that sages and seekers of enlightenment underwent severe mortification and arduous

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[41]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 241.
[42]Ibid., p. 435.
[43]"Wise" is a more appropriate translation of *nipuṇa,* particularly in this context.
[44]Maharishi, *On the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 379.

"penances" for the sake of unfolding the supreme reality of life.[45] Maharishi, however, provides a more profound understanding of *tapas*, noting that:

> *Tapas* means increasing in glow—glow of life. Life is infinity, immortality, immovability, unboundedness, absolute. So increasing value of the glow of life means the increasing value of infinity, of immortality, of unboundedness, of absolute Being.[46]

Maharishi also comments that this "glow of life" spontaneously grows when purity and contentment increase through the regular experience of self-referral consciousness.[47] From this perspective, the above verse discloses that the sages grew in *Dharma* through their unfoldment of self-referral consciousness, not from intellectual understanding.[48]

An additional passage supports this view that life in accord with *Dharma* is not based on intellectual understanding. In this verse, Sītā does not refer to the means for growing in *Dharma,* but rather to the result of being established in it. She remarks to Kausalyā:

धर्माद्विचलितुं नाहमलं चन्द्रादिव प्रभा

Dharmād vichalituṁ nāham alaṁ chandrād iva prabhā

I am not able to deviate from Dharma any more than the rays from the moon.

—2.39.28

This verse suggests more than an intellectual familiarity with the laws of *Dharma* and a willingness to obey them, for as we find throughout the Rāmāyaṇ, determining what is proper is difficult and often impossible. Rather, the metaphor of the moon and its rays suggests a profound connection between Sītā's actions and her essential nature. The rays of the moon are a natural byproduct of the fullness of the moon's light; there is no calculation nor analysis in their emanation. They simply act in harmony with the Laws of Nature

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[45]The following verse provides an example of *tapas* being used to remove imperfection and create "Perfected Beings":

सिद्धा वैखानसा यत्र वालखील्याश्च तापसाः

वन्दितव्यास्ततः सिद्धास्तपसा वीतकल्मषाः

Siddhā Vaikhānasā yatra Vālakhīlyāsh cha tāpasāḥ
vanditavyās tataḥ siddhās tapasā vītakalmashāḥ

There dwell perfected ascetics—Vaikhanāsas and Vālakhilyas. These perfected beings have been completely rid of blemish through tapas, and are thus to be honored.

—4.43.32

[46]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Patanjali and the Eight Limbs of Yoga*.

[47]Ibid., cited in Sands, p. 175.

[48]Maharishi's view is supported throughout the Rāmāyaṇa. In the follwoing example (2.118.14) Rām and Sītā encounter Anasūyā—a female sage who remarks to Sītā:

नियमैर्विविधैराप्तं तपो हि महदस्ति मे

तत्संश्रित्य बलं सीते छन्दये त्वां शुचिव्रते

Niyamair vividhair āptaṁ tapo hi mahad asti me
tat saṁshritya balaṁ Sīte chhandaye tvāṁ shuchivrate

Indeed I have accumulated great tapas from various practices; taking recourse to that power, O Sītā of pure behavior, I wish to confer a boon on you.

Here *tapas* is described as the result of various practices, not as the practice of austerities. Maharishi's description of *tapas* as the growth of pure consciousness assists our understanding of this verse.

that govern their activity. Sītā likewise does not express reluctance to act outside of *Dharma;* rather, she states emphatically that she is unable to. Her consonance with *Dharma* is thus a spontaneous result of the fullness of her own Being, and nothing with which she needs to contemplate nor interfere.

Thus far we have seen how Maharishi's comments on the nature of *Dharma* and Natural Law provide a theoretical basis for better understanding a number of key verses in the Rāmāyaṇ. In the next section, we will examine how the Rāmāyaṇ brings out the knowledge of *Dharma* through its central hero, Rām.

Rām as the Embodiment of Natural Law

Most modern scholars since Hermann Jacobi's mid-nineteenth century study[49] have concluded that Rām was originally cast as a thoroughly human, though extraordinarily gifted, prince of Ayodhyā.[50] They speculate that Rām's divine status was superimposed during the text's long history of transmission, transformed by "itinerant singers" who embellished upon the original Rāmāyaṇ to enhance the enjoyment of their audience and to reflect their own system of beliefs.[51] References to Rām's extraordinary abilities and his remarkable personality are thus dismissed by modern scholars as either interpolations, or if manuscript evidence requires their acceptance, as epic hyperbole.

Maharishi presents a notably different perspective, however, describing Rām as "the supreme element, the full blossom of total intelligence." He further notes that "the words from the Rāmāyaṇ are: *Rām Brāhm, paramāratha rūpā*; Rām is Totality, Rām is *Brahman*. The knowledge of Rām is the knowledge of *Brahman*."[52] Thus, Maharishi holds Rām to be the embodiment of *Brahman*—the supreme totality of life. In this view, Rām is the essential nature of the whole creation, governing and sustaining it from the transcendental level; he is the absolute government, the managing intelligence of creation, which silently administers the ever-expanding universe:

> Rām is *Brahman,* and his body is pure spirituality (*paramāratha rūpā* is pure spirituality), the quantum mechanical body. Only in this position, only in this state, can he be the ruler of the universe. The ruler of the universe, ruling infinite diversity, has that miraculous structure of creative intelligence that is the sum total of all the possible diverse values.[53]

The ruler of the universe, Maharishi explains, is fully awake self-referral consciousness, silently organizing every aspect of the universe without mistakes. To be the ruler of the universe, as Rām is so often called throughout the Rāmāyaṇ,[54] he must be identified with the total potential of Natural Law, that level of life which governs through its transcendental, omnipresent, and all-pervading nature. Maharishi further states that "Rām, in

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[49]Hermann Jacobi, *Das Rāmāyaṇa: Geschichte und Inhalt, nebst Concordanz der Gedrkten Recensionen*, Bonn: Friederich Cohen, 1893.

[50]Robert J. Goldman, ed. and trans., *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India, Volume I, Bālakāṇḍa.*

[51]Camille Bulcke, "The Rāmāyaṇa: Its History and Character," *PO*, Vol. XXV, 1960, pp. 36-66.

[52]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Call on Victory Day: Continental Assembly on World Peace and Perfect Health* [Audiotaped Lecture, 18, October, 1991, Fairfield, IA].

[53]Ibid.

[54]For example, see 5.51.43 which describes Rām as सर्वलोकेश्वरः—" ruler of the three worlds." The "three worlds" refers to the entire field of relative life.

Rāmāyaṇ, is portrayed as the embodiment of *Dharma*—Natural Law—*Purushottam*[55]—the abstract, unmanifest, absolute ruler of the ever-expanding universe."[56]

Maharishi's view of Rām is well-corroborated throughout the Rāmāyaṇ. Rām is not only the knower of *Dharma*, but according to the enlightened Ṛishis he is the knower of the supreme *Dharma* (परमधर्मज्ञ *paramadharmagya,* 3.6.7) and is one whose Self (*Ātmā*) is firmly established in *Dharma* (धर्मे धृतात्मा *Dharme dhritātmā*, 3.6.26). Thus, his command of *Dharma* is based upon his state of awareness and not merely on his acute understanding of ancestral mores.

The above quote from Maharishi makes it clear that Rām is more than an enlightened man; he is the embodiment of the total potential of Natural Law, which organizes the universe from the transcendental level.[57] This view is emphasized throughout the traditional southern recension of the Rāmāyaṇ, particularly in the famous passages of the Bāla, Yuddha, and Uttara Kāṇdas where Rām's divine status is clearly noted. While many of these passages have been accepted by the Critical Edition—such as Dasharatha's proclamation of Rām's divine origin—they are often dismissed by scholars as either early interpolations or hyperbolic descriptions of a mythical king. Nevertheless, we will see that when viewed in the light of Maharishi Vedic Science, these descriptions of Rām take on a new significance fundamental to the proper understanding of his nature.

In our first example, taken from the Yuddha Kāṇda, the hero Hanuman warns Rām's nemesis, Rāvaṇ, of Rām's might:

सर्वाँल्लोकान्सुसंहृत्य सभूतान्सचराचरान्
पुनरेव तथा स्रष्टुं शक्तो रामो महायशाः

Sarvāṁllokān susaṁhṛitya sabhūtān sacharācharān
punar eva tathā srashtuṁ shakto Rāmo mahāyashāḥ

Easily withdrawing all the worlds together with all beings both moving and unmoving, the mighty Rām is capable of creating them again.

—5.51.39,40

This verse is generally considered a description of Rām's physical strength—his ability to conquer anyone at any time. But in a larger sense, it is strikingly consistent with the traditional depiction of the beginning and end of the universe.[58] Note that Hanuman does not say Rām can destroy the worlds; rather, he says that Rām is able to easily withdraw them (*lokān susaṁhṛitya*). Moreover, Hanuman observes that Rām is capable of creating them again (*punar eva tathā srashtuṁ shaktaḥ*), an achievement exclusively within the purview of Natural Law. Hence, Hanuman not only provides Rāvaṇ with a picture of Rām's valor and strength, but more significantly he depicts Rām's role as creator and managing intelligence of the universe.

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[55]Maharishi explains that the intelligence within every grain of creation has a silent quality known as *Purusha*. *Purushottama* is the congregate of all the innumerable *Purusha* in the universe. It is thus Totality, *Brahm,* the silent level of the ruler of the universe (*Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, pp. 370–372).

[56]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, pp. 36–37.

[57]Ibid., p. 41.

[58]For example, see Swāmī Vijñānanda, trans., *Śrīmad Devī Bhāgavatam*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992, p. 3.

Speaking to Sītā, Hanuman supports the interpretation of Rām as the most profound level of *Dharma,* the level that gives rise to and upholds the entire universe. His point is both important and intriguing:

> मर्यादानां च लोकस्य कर्ता कारयिता च सः
>
> *Maryādānāṁ cha lokasya kartā kārayitā cha saḥ*
>
> *He is the creator and the instigator of the boundaries of the world.*
>
> —5.35.11

In this half verse, Hanuman defines Rām by two terms that initially may appear redundant—*kartā* (creator) and *kārayitā* (instigator)—leading translators to a variety of interpretations. Shastri interprets them respectively as "inaugurator" and "establisher" ("he inaugurates and establishes the social order"),[59] while Raghunathan similarly renders them in paraphrase as "he is the author of the norms of *Dharma*, and is their prop and stay."[60] The Gita Press version, on the other hand, takes more liberty: "He has fixed the (bounds of propriety) to be observed by the people and has inspired the *Ṛishis* and others to do so."[61] The key to correctly distinguishing between *kartā* and *kārayitā*, however, may lie in the interpretation of *maryādānāṁ* (genitive plural of *maryādā*). While "norms of society" is an acceptable translation—and one that certainly does not weaken the argument for Rām as the author of creation—*maryādā* can also be taken simply to mean "boundaries," in the broadest sense referring to the relative boundaries of space and time. If we apply this meaning, we can then distinguish, as we shall see, between two subtle distinctions of authorship that may account for the simultaneous use of *kartā* and *kārayitā*.

Maharishi explains that self-referral consciousness, on its most fundamental level, maintains two seemingly contradictory roles: it is the source of creation—the fountainhead of all creative energy and intelligence in the relative field—and also the silent, uninvolved, "non-doer" which manifests creation without changing. Maharishi uses the following analogy to explain how something can take more than one form without losing its essential character:

> Oxygen and hydrogen ions combine to give rise to the properties of water. The water freezes, giving rise to the properties of ice. In these different states of gas, liquid and solid, the basic elements—oxygen and hydrogen—remain the same. In as much as they are the fundamental material from which gas, water and ice are formed, oxygen and hydrogen could be said to have created these different substances. But because they remain oxygen and hydrogen through their various states, they could be said to be non-doing. Such is the state of ultimate Being. Lying at the base of all creation, it is the 'author' and, remaining unchanged, it is the 'non-doer' and 'immutable'.[62]

Using Maharishi's analogy as a model, *kārayitā* appears to correspond to the creator of the universe, while *kartā* suggests the underlying field of intelligence. While "instigator" is not an elegant translation of *kārayitā*, its causative construction indicates a slightly more active role. The two together, then, appear to identify Rām not only with the creative

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[59]Hari Prasad Shastri, trans., *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*, Vol. II, London: Shanti Sadan, 1985, p. 414.
[60]N. Raghunathan, trans., *Śrīmad Vālmīki Ramayana m*, Vol. II, Madras: Vighnesvara Publishing House, 1981, p. 420.
[61]*Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam*, Gorakhpur: Gītā Press, 1992, p. 1234.
[62]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *On the Bhagavad Gita*, p. 240.

process, but also with the underlying, non-involved intelligence at its basis.

Maharishi points out that self-referral consciousness is not only the source of creation, but its individual expressions are themselves consciousness. In other words, the entire field of diversity *is* the field of consciousness. Maharishi explains this relationship between creation and its underlying constituent by means of an analogy:

> The sap has all the values of the tender petals. Also it has within the same structure, the value of the prickly thorns. It is the totality that makes the sap the field of all possibilities. It is the sap that pervades every fiber of the plant. Like that is the situation of the ruler of universe; it has to be omnipresent.[63]

Maharishi here compares a plant's sap to the omnipresent field of pure consciousness—just as the sap pervades every fiber of the plant, self-referral consciousness is present in every grain of creation. This intimate relationship between creator and creation is described in the Rāmāyaṇ by the citizens of Ayodhyā who, in a moving sequence, lament Rām's impending exile to the forest:

तस्मात्तस्योपघातेन प्रजाः परमपीडिताः
औदकानीव सत्त्वानि ग्रीष्मे सलिलसंक्षयात्

Tasmāt tasyopaghātena prajāḥ paramapīditāḥ
audokānīva sattvāni grīshme salilasaṁkshayāt

Therefore, the people are extremely hurt by this injury, just as creatures of the sea when the water is dried up in the summer.

—2.33.13

The simile in this verse presents a view of Rām consonant with Maharishi's analysis of self-referral consciousness and its expressions. Water is the environment in which sea creatures dwell; it surrounds them and forms the basis for their entire reality. In the same way, Rām, the self-referral basis of life, is the environment that gives sustenance to all values of the citizens' lives. Hence, when Rām is banished to the forest, Ayodhyā's citizens feel "dried up," that the basis for their lives is lost. Their expressions are more than praise for a good and noble prince—they are the anguished cries of those cut off from the nourishment of their own transcendental consciousness. The next verse expands upon this theme:

पीडया पीडितं सर्वं जगदस्य जगत्पतेः
मूलस्येवोपघातेन वृक्षः पुष्पफलोपगः

Pīdayā pīditaṁ sarvaṁ jagad asya jagatpateḥ
mūlasyevopaghātena vṛikshaḥ pushpaphalopagaḥ

The entire world is afflicted by the injury to the Lord of the world, just as a tree together with its flowers and fruit is hurt by an injury to its root.

—2.33.14

Here Rām—the "ruler of the world"—is likened to a root which gives sustenance to the whole tree, its fruits, and its flowers. Maharishi often employs the same analogy to express

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[63]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Victory Day 1991*.

the importance of acting from transcendental consciousness:

> It is like the process whereby a tree receives water at its root, and consequently all parts of the tree naturally receive nourishment and flourish. But no part of the tree is aware of, or experiences, the process of the root receiving the water. Its influence is seen in the increasing freshness of all parts of the tree.[64]

Maharishi's point is that experiencing self-referral consciousness brings nourishment to every area of life, whether we are aware of it or not.[65] Hence, in the above verse the metaphor of the root and tree not only points to Rām as the transcendental source of the world, it also delineates his role as its nourisher; and when that nourishment is cut off from its citizens, they suffer.

The citizens of Ayodhyā continue to exhibit dismay at Rām's departure in the next verse, in which the parallel is more explicit:

मूलं ह्येषः मनुष्याणां धर्मसारो महाद्युतिः
पुष्पं फलं च पुत्रं च शाखाश्चास्येतरे जनाः

Mūlaṁ hyeshaḥ manushyāṇāṁ Dharmasāro
mahādyutiḥ pushpaṁ phalaṁ cha putraṁ cha
shākhāshchāsyetare janāḥ

For he is the essence of Dharma, of extraordinary effulgence, the root of mankind; the other citizens are the flower, fruit, leaf, and branches of him.
—2.33.15

This verse reinforces Rām's status as the source of mankind's nourishment. In this capacity he is *Dharma-sāra*—the essence of *Dharma*—the fundamental constituent of the different *Dharmas* (individual, family, social, etc.). The final line of the verse, *pushpaṁ phalaṁ cha putraṁ cha shākhāshchāsyetare janāḥ* ("the other citizens are the flower, fruit, leaf, and branches of him") brings out an important characteristic of Rām. He is not only the source of creation, he is also the innumerable expressions of self-referral consciousness, in this case embodied by the citizens who see themselves as his "flower, fruit, leaf, and branches."

While the preceding verses establish Rām as the total potential of Natural Law, the following emphasizes his role as the source of the individual Laws of Nature. This verse appears in the Ayodhyā Kāṇda, where the counselors of Rām's father Dasharatha comment on Rām's divine nature to demonstrate his suitability for kingship:

रामः सत्पुरुषो लोके सत्यधर्मपरायणः
साक्षाद्रामाद्विनिर्वृत्तो धर्मश्चापि श्रिया सह

Rāmaḥ sat purusho loke satyadharmaparāyaṇaḥ
sākshād Rāmād vinirvṛitto Dharmashchāpi shriyā saha

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[64]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Science of Being*, p. 62.
[65]Ibid., p. 63.

Rām is existence, self-referral consciousness, the supreme refuge in this world of Dharma and Truth; Truly, Dharma, together with good fortune, proceeds from Rām.

—2.2.29

Of all Rām's notable qualities cited in this passage, perhaps the most significant is found in the expression *Rāmād vinirvṛitto Dharma* ("*Dharma* … proceeds from Rām"). We can take this expression in two ways: first of all, that Rām only speaks and behaves in accord with *Dharma*—an adequate interpretation (in which case *satpurusha* should be taken as a "righteous man"); or secondly, that Rām is the total potential of Natural Law, the self-referral source of all the individual *Dharmas* upholding life on every level. In the second choice (on which the above translation is based), we find a preferable reading of *satpurusha* by separating an apparent *tatpurusha*[66] into two distinct substantives, *sat* ("existence") and *Purusha* ("self-referral consciousness"), here equated with Rām. In this interpretation, Rām is identified as the managing intelligence of the universe from whom the various Laws of Nature emerge. While both readings are grammatically correct, we prefer the second, for it describes Rām as the self-referral source of *Dharma* together with all good fortune and prosperity (*shriyā saha*).

Rām, as the embodiment of self-referral consciousness, is not only the source of the universe, he is also the basis of subjective life. His brother Lakshmaṇ brings out this theme in the Yuddha Kāṇda when he asks:

किमात्मानं महात्मानमात्मानं नावबुध्यसे

Kim ātmānaṁ mahātmānam ātmānaṁ nāvabudhyase

How is it that you yourself do not recognize that you are the Self, the Great Self?

—6.83.43

Here the repetition of *Ātmā* is significant. The third (Sanskrit) occurrence of *Ātmā* apparently refers to the individual nature of Rām, which Lakshmaṇ identifies with the unbounded Self. Thus, Lakshmaṇ asks, in essence, how it is that Rām does not recognize that his individuality is also the unbounded, eternal *Ātmā*. Lakshmaṇ then identifies both of these with *Mahātmā*, "great Self," the fully awake Self of the entire creation. In this way he not only affirms Rām's status as the unbounded Self but also as the Totality, *Brahman*, self-referral consciousness and all of its transformations.

The theme of Rām as the source of individual life is further elucidated in the following verse, as the sage Nārada speaks metaphorically of Rām's universal accessibility:

सर्वदाभिगतः सद्भिः समुद्र इव सिन्धुभिः

Sarvadābhigataḥ sadbhiḥ samudra iva sindhubhiḥ

He is always approached by the wise as is the ocean by the rivers.

—1.1.16

[66]A compound is a group of nouns placed together to form a single substantive, in which all case endings other than the final are usually eliminated. A determinative, or *tatpurusha*, compound is one in which the final member is defined by the elements preceding it.

We could justifiably take this expression as a tribute to Rām's wisdom, as the wise will naturally seek a great king's advice. But the metaphor of the ocean and the rivers flowing into it appears to suggest a deeper meaning. Self-referral consciousness is the unified source of all individual life, and one could envision its individual expressions emerging from it like so many streams from an ocean. However, this verse depicts rivers approaching the ocean, reminiscent of individuals practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique, who return to the unified source of their own lives.[67] The verse further indicates that it is the wise who approach the ocean (Rām), for it is the wise who understand the true goal of life and seek to discover it.

We can take this interpretation one more step and apply the ocean/river metaphor to Maharishi's explanation of the growth to higher states of consciousness. In progressing toward the supreme unfoldment of Unity Consciousness, one in effect approaches Rām, the embodiment of Totality, as a river flows into an ocean.

The preceding verses have enabled us to better understand Rām's status as the embodiment of *Dharma*. The following section will explore the significance of the Maharishi Effect, and how Maharishi's explanation of this effect enables us to understand the basis of Rām's rule in Ayodhyā.

The *Maharishi Effect* in the Rāmāyaṇ

The Āraṇya Kāṇda contains an important, though little noted, passage that provides insight into the mechanics underlying Ayodhyā's ideal society during Rām's reign. In this selection of verses, a spontaneous transformation of evil forest creatures into more harmonious, more life-supporting beings takes place simply from the presence of the enlightened sage Agastya:

यदाप्रभृति चाक्रान्ता दिगियं पुण्यकर्मणा
तदाप्रभृति निर्वैराः प्रशान्ता रजनीचराः

Yadāprabhṛiti chākrāntā dig iyaṁ puṇyakarmaṇā
tadāprabhṛiti nirvairāḥ prashāntā rajanīcharāḥ

From the moment that this virtuous sage arrived in this area, the evil creatures have become peaceful and free of hostility.

—3.11.83

Agastya's effect on the forest dwellers comes neither from his good intentions nor his actions; rather he pacifies the evil creatures merely through his vicinity. His coherent consciousness gives the sinful no choice but to change or depart:

नात्र जीवेन्मृषावादी क्रूरो वा यदि वा शठः
नृशंसः पापवृत्तो वा मुनिरेष तथाविधः

Nātra jīven mṛishāvādī krūro vā yadi vā shathaḥ
nṛishaṁsaḥ pāpavṛitto vā munir esha tathāvidhaḥ

[67]In his description of the Transcendental Meditation technique Maharishi notes: "This process can be likened to a river which naturally and effortlessly flows into the ocean and gains the status of the ocean," Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, p. 280.

> *This sage is of such a nature that a liar, a cruel person, a thief, or a sinner cannot live in this area.*
> —3.11.90

These verses suggest that when individuals such as Agastya are fully established in self-referral consciousness, they naturally create greater harmony and orderliness around them. However, Maharishi explains that this same outcome can be created by many individuals experiencing self-referral consciousness in their daily practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique and the collective practice of the Transcendental Meditation Sidhi program. This effect, termed the *Maharishi Effect* after its founder, relies on the phenomenon of collective consciousness. To fully appreciate the significance of these verses, as well as to better understand Maharishi's exposition of how to bring life into accord with Natural Law, it will be useful to examine Maharishi's discussion of collective consciousness and the *Maharishi Effect*.

Maharishi describes collective consciousness as the wholeness of consciousness of any specific group: "when we talk of community consciousness, we merely put together the consciousness of all the individuals who make up the community, or the nation."[68] By community Maharishi refers to any specific group, and while there are innumerable divisions and organizations of collective consciousness, he notes seven that are principal: family consciousness, community consciousness, city consciousness, state or provincial consciousness, national consciousness, world consciousness, and universal consciousness, each created by its component individuals.[69]

Maharishi's account of collective consciousness may first appear unusual unless we understand consciousness as a field as described by modern science. Physicists delineate a variety of infinite, unbounded, and all pervasive fields that operate invisibly throughout creation governing the activities of innumerable laws of nature. For example, the electromagnetic field—one of the four principal force fields—permeates the entire universe, and enables radio and television transmitters to send signals by creating waves within the field. While the waves are unseen, they nonetheless create effects with which we are all familiar—the sounds and images of radio and television.

Likewise, the other three fundamental force fields—gravitation, weak interaction, and strong interaction—also pervade everything and behave invisibly throughout Nature. Maharishi holds that self-referral consciousness also operates as a field, though on an even more fundamental level; it is the omnipresent, invisible, and unbounded field from which all force and matter fields emerge. Just as a radio transmitter can create waves in the electromagnetic field, individuals constantly create influences on all parts of creation simply because consciousness permeates every aspect of the material world. Maharishi frequently employs an analogy to explain this point:

> If a stone is thrown into a pond, waves are produced that travel throughout the pond. Each wave produces some effect in every part of the pond. Similarly, the wave of individual life, through its activity, produces an influence in all parts of the cosmos.[70]

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[68]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Enlightenment and Invincibility*, Rheinweiler, W. Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press, 1978, p. 87.

[69]*World Government News*, Issue no. 10, October, 1978, p. 3.

[70]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Science of Being*, p. 73.

Similarly, the direct experience of self-referral consciousness influences every aspect of the universe, enlivening it with the perfect order and harmony inherent in its structure. Moreover, groups of individuals also can create very powerful effects in the environment through their collective practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs.

Essential to this discussion of collective consciousness is its relationship to individual consciousness. Maharishi explains that "as individual consciousness grows, collective consciousness rises; and as collective consciousness rises, individual consciousness grows."[71] In other words, as an individual regularly experiences self-referral consciousness and enlivens it in the awareness, the levels of collective consciousness in which the person participates—family, city, province, etc.—are simultaneously improved. This higher value of collective consciousness in turn effects every individual who comprises it. Individual consciousness is thus the basis of all levels of collective consciousness, influencing them and in turn being influenced by them.[72]

Since individual and collective consciousness maintain a reciprocal relationship, it stands to reason that a large number of individuals practicing the Transcendental Meditation program will bring a powerful influence of orderliness and harmony to collective consciousness, enabling an entire population to act more coherently. In 1962, in fact, Maharishi predicted significant improvements in the quality of life in any population in which a small percentage practiced the Transcendental Meditation technique:[73]

> My calculation is that the day one-tenth of the adult population of the world begins to meditate a half-hour morning and evening and begins to emit an influence of peace and harmony from the deepest level of consciousness—from that day, the atmosphere of the world, this negative atmosphere of the world, will be neutralized, and from that day will dawn the chance of no war for centuries to come.[74]

Maharishi later noted that one percent of the adult population would be enough, but that he had indicated ten percent "for safety factor."[75] He added that the requirement for improving the quality of life in society is small because the influence from the level of pure consciousness is much more powerful than from the conscious level.[76] The figure of one percent has since become the basis for research into Maharishi's prediction.

In 1976, however, after introducing the advanced Transcendental Meditation Sidhi program, including Yogic Flying, Maharishi predicted that only the square root of one percent of a population practicing this more powerful technology in a group was necessary to create World Peace.[77] The introduction of this program has provided greater opportunities for empirically verifying Maharishi's prediction, for experts in the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs periodically assemble in large groups to create the

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[71]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Creating an Ideal Society*, Rheinweiler, W. Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press, 1976, p. 124.

[72]Ibid., p. 124.

[73]*His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi—Thirty Years Around the World: Dawn of the Age of Enlightenment*, The Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1986, p. 430.

[74]Ibid., p. 430.

[75]Ibid., p. 430.

[76]Ibid., p. 430.

[77]The square root of one percent was based on the observation that other coherent systems (such as laser beams and superconductors) rely on the coherence of the square root of one percent of their constituent elements (electrons in the case of a laser beam or superconductor) in order to create more order in the entire system.

Extended Maharishi Effect. The results of this collective practice have been documented on every level of society, including city life,[78] state and provincial life,[79] national life,[80] the life of neighboring countries,[81] of international life,[82] and global life.[83]

We can now see that Agastya's influence on his environment can be clearly explained through the scientific principle of the Maharishi Effect. While the effect is generally produced by many individuals experiencing self-referral consciousness during their Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi practice, in the case of Agastya it is created because he is an enlightened sage, permanently established in self-referral consciousness; he thus naturally and automatically brings the total potential of Natural Law to collective consciousness.

With this understanding of group consciousness and the Maharishi Effect, we will see in the following section how the enlivenment of the total potential of Natural Law in the collective consciousness of the citizens of Ayodhyā, through the sovereignty of Rām, created an ideal society.

Society in Accord with *Dharma*

In the Rāmāyaṇ, Rām defeats Rāvaṇ and his armies in battle, frees his wife Sītā, and triumphantly returns to Ayodhyā where he rules for many years. The Rāmāyaṇ relates that during his long reign, the entire society lived fully in accord with *Dharma*, experienced great happiness and fulfillment, and enjoyed the absence of crime and disease. Maharishi also speaks of the potential for an ideal society in perfect accord with Natural Law, characterized by unlimited progress, success, and freedom from weakness of any kind, a description remarkably similar to Rām's reign in the Rāmāyaṇ.

This view of a perfect society is not surprising in light of Maharishi's explanation of the total potential of individual life. Certainly a society in which the individuals live perfection will be ideal, but Maharishi's explanation of collective consciousness provides a vision of ideal life for everyone even when only a small number are coherent and harmo-

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[78]Audri G. Lanford, "Reduction in Homicide in Washington, D.C. Through the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field, 1980-1983: A Time Series Analysis," In R.A. Chalmers, G. Clements, H. Schenkluhn, & M. Weinless (Eds.), *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme: Collected Papers Vol. 4*, 1984, pp. 2600-2608; Michael C. Dillbeck, Kenneth L. Cavanaugh, Thomas Glenn, David W. Orme-Johnson, & Vicki Mittlefehldt, "Consciousness as a Field: The Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Program and Changes in Social Indicators," The *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 8, 1987, 67–104.

[79]Dori Reeks, *Improved Quality of Life in Iowa Through the Maharishi Effect*, diss., Maharishi International University, 1990.

[80]W. Burgmans, A. T. van der Burgt, F. P. Langenkamp, J.H. Verstegen, "Sociological Effects of the Group Dynamics of Consciousness: Decrease of Crime and Traffic Accidents in Holland," 1983, In R.A. Chalmers, G. Clements, H. Schenkluhn, & M. Weinless (Eds.), *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme: Collected Papers Vol. 4*, pp. 2566–2582.

[81]Kenneth L. Cavanaugh, "Time Series Analysis of U.S. and Canadian Inflation and Unemployment: A Test of a Field-Theoretic Hypothesis," *Proceedings of the American Statistical Association, Business and Economics Statistics Section,* 1987, pp. 799–804.

[82]Paul Gelderloos, J.F. Frid, Philip H. Goddard, X. Xue, & Sarah Löliger, "Creating World Peace Through the Collective Practice of the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field: Improved U.S.-Soviet Relations," Social Science Perspectives Journal, 2 (4), 1988, pp. 80–94; David W. Orme-Johnson, Michael C. Dillbeck, Jean G. Bousquet, & Charles N. Alexander, "The World Peace Project of 1978: An Experimental Analysis of Achieving World Peace Through the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field," 1985, In R.A. Chalmers, G. Clements, H. Schenkluhn, & M. Weinless (Eds.), *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme: Collected papers Vol. 4*, pp. 2532–2548.

[83]David W. Orme-Johnson, et al. "The Influence of the Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field on World Events and Global Social Indicators: The Effects of the Taste of Utopia Assembly," 1987, In R.A. Chalmers, G. Clements, H. Schenkluhn, & M. Weinless (Eds.), *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programme: Collected Papers, Vol. 4*, pp. 2730–2762.

nious. Maharishi refers to such a society as Heaven on Earth:

> In one expression, Heaven on Earth will be characterized by all good everywhere and non-good nowhere. What is Heaven on Earth? It is perfect health, a perfect way of thinking, a perfect way of doing. A perfect way of thinking means every thought will be appropriate for the thinker and his surroundings, and appropriate thought results in appropriate action and appropriate behavior.[84]

In Maharishi's analysis, Heaven on Earth is more than an intellectually derived ideal because the technology necessary to bring it to fruition is presently available in the technologies of his Vedic Science. He emphasizes that these technologies will enable the whole of mankind to think and act spontaneously in accord with Natural Law, and that "when thinking is always spontaneously evolutionary then there is Heaven for everyone."[85]

Contemporary interpretations of the Rāmāyaṇ assume that Rām's skill and charisma are the factors that restore Ayodhyā to a better civilization; they hold that the depictions of perfect life during his reign are hyperbolic, added simply to provide poetic flair. Maharishi, however, takes these accounts literally, explaining that in Ayodhyā the total potential of Natural Law was restored to the collective consciousness in the person of Lord Rām, and the removal of stress and negativity from the collective consciousness resulted from the destruction of Rāvaṇ.

Our first example of Ayodhyā as an ideal society is a general one, which describes life in accord with *Dharma*:

> सर्वं मुदितमेवासीत्सर्वो धर्मपरोऽभवत्
> राममेवानुपश्यन्तो नाभ्यहिंसन्परस्परम्
>
> *Sarvaṁ muditam evāsīt sarvo Dharmaparo 'bhavat*
> *Rāmam evānupashyanto nābhyahiṁsan parasparam*
>
> *Happiness was universal, and everyone was established in Dharma. Seeing Rām alone, they did not harm each other.*
>
> —6.131.100

In addition to avowing that Ayodhyā's citizens were established in *Dharma*, this verse makes the remarkable assertion that merely the sight of Rām sufficiently deterred criminal behavior. Maharishi depicts Rām as the embodiment of Natural Law[86] and, therefore, "seeing Rām alone" appears to describe the direct experience of self-referral consciousness. In this view, the verse may also imply the phenomenon of spontaneous right action resulting from the experience of self-referral consciousness. The employment of the enclitic particle *eva*, which generally places emphasis on the preceding word, suggests that only the experience of Rām (*Rāmam eva*) is necessary to rise above the desire to cause harm.

The following verse indicates that all criminal activity in Ayodhyā completely ceased during Rām's rule:[87]

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[84]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Heaven on Earth*, p. 1.

[85]Ibid., p. 1.

[86]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Maharishi's Absolute Theory of Government*, p. 36.

[87]In Maharishi's view all violation of Natural Law is criminal behavior—the "hardened" criminal merely violates Natural Law more severely.

निर्दस्युरभवल्लोको नानर्थः कंचिदस्पृशत्

Nirdasyur abhaval loko nānarthaḥ kaṁchid aspṛishat

The world had no robbers nor did anyone suffer harm.

—6.131.99

It is interesting that *nānarthaḥ kaṁchid aspṛishat* ("nor did anyone suffer harm") can also be read as "no one performed useless (action)."[88] In this interpretation, the citizen's lives were not only free of criminal behavior, they were always purposeful, always efficient, and always aimed toward greater achievement and fulfillment. Regardless of interpretation, however, the overall sense is essentially the same—the people of Ayodhyā acted without mistakes, illustrating Maharishi's explanation that life in accord with Natural Law is perfectly correct, always evolutionary.

The celestial sage Nārada also discusses the reign of Rām in the opening *sarga* of the Rāmāyaṇ:

चतुर्वर्ण्यं च लोकेऽस्मिन्स्वे स्वे धर्मे नियोक्ष्यति

Chaturvarṇyaṁ cha loke 'smin sve sve Dharme niyokshyati

Each member of the fourfold order will be enjoined in their own Dharma.

—1.1.96

This verse presents an important element of the Rāmāyaṇ's teaching on *Dharma*, unavailable without Maharishi's commentary. Here we find that every individual was "enjoined" to act in accord with *Dharma*, but in a later verse (6.131.100) they are said to be fulfilled in their *Dharma*. It is difficult, as we know, to coerce or enjoin citizens in any land and expect them to remain fulfilled; thus it is unlikely that the citizens of Ayodhyā would have remained fulfilled had they been pressured against their will. Maharishi's commentary on Natural Law resolves this seeming incongruity; he explains that the functioning of self-referral consciousness is the functioning of Natural Law in its most settled state. When the conscious human mind identifies itself with this level of Nature's functioning, it gains the ability to perform in the style with which Nature performs.[89] When this value of Natural Law became lively in the collective consciousness of Ayodhyā after the return of Rām, all the citizens spontaneously lived in accord with Natural Law; that is, they were "enjoined" by the natural force of evolution to live in their own Dharma, thus promoting their own happiness and welfare as well as that of society.

The following verse also presents this theme of fulfillment in the performance of *Dharma*:

ब्राह्मणाः क्षत्रिया वैश्याः शूद्रा लोभविवर्जिताः
स्वकर्मसु प्रवर्तन्ते तुष्टाः स्वैरेव कर्मभिः

Brāhmaṇāḥ Kshatriyā Vaishyāḥ Shūdrā lobhavivarjitāḥ
svakarmasu pravartante tushtāḥ svair eva karmabhiḥ

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[88]*Anartha—an + artha*—is more commonly translated "worthless."

[89]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Vedic Knowledge for Everyone*, Holland: Maharishi Vedic University Press, 1994, pp. 108–153.

Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shūdras, bereft of greed, performed their own duties and were fulfilled in their own activity.

—6.131.104

This verse explains that the members of Ayodhyā's different castes (*Brāhmaṇas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shūdras*) had their own social responsibilities that both upheld the *Dharma* of society and effectively supported their own evolution. This verse refutes any assertion of coercion or force, for it clearly indicates that Ayodhyā's citizens were fulfilled in performing their *Dharma*.

An additional verse illustrates that even small violations of Natural Law, such as the telling of lies, were in abeyance:

आसन्प्रजा धर्मरता रामे शासति नानृताः
सर्वे लक्षणसम्पन्नाः सर्वे धर्मपरायणाः

Āsan prajā Dharmaratā Rāme shāsati nānṛitāḥ sarve lakshaṇasampannāḥ sarve Dharma-parāyaṇāḥ

So long as Rām ruled, the people were devoted to Dharma and never told lies. All were endowed with auspicious marks and all were established in Dharma.

—6.131.105

Similarly, Ayodhyā was free of sickness and natural catastrophes:

नाकाले म्रियते कश्चिन्न व्याधि प्राणिनां तथा
नानर्थो विद्यते कश्चिद्रामे राज्यं प्रशासति

Nākāle mriyate kashchin na vyādhi prāṇināṁ tathā nānartho vidyate kashchid Rāme rājyaṁ prashāsati

During the reign of Rām, no one died prematurely, no one suffered from disease, and there were no calamities.

—7.99.14

This verse not only documents the absence of sickness, but points to the prevalence of long and healthy life spans during Rām's reign; it provides the vision of an ideal society founded in perfect health, a model of perfect life for all mankind in all ages.

In these descriptions of Ayodhyā during Rām's reign, we not only see among the people a profound state of happiness and fulfillment, we find the growth of balance in all areas of life including the environment. For example, the Rāmāyaṇ clearly connects the reign of Rām with the growth of balance in Nature in the following descriptions:

नित्यपुष्पा नित्यफलास्तरवः स्कन्धविस्तृताः
काले वर्षी च पर्जन्यः सुखस्पर्शश्च मारुतः

Nityapushpā nityaphalāstaravaḥ skandhavistṛitāḥ kāle varshī cha Parjanyaḥ sukhasparshash cha Mārutaḥ

There (in Ayodhyā) the trees with outstretched branches were always in blossom, always laden with fruits; the rains came on time and the winds were pleasant to the touch.

—6.131.103

काले वर्षति पर्जन्यः सुभिक्षं विमला दिशः
हृष्टपुष्टजनाकीर्णं पुरं जनपदास्तथा

Kāle varshati Parjanyaḥ subhikshaṁ vimalā dishaḥ
hṛishtapushtajanākīrṇaṁ puraṁ janapadās tathā

The rains came on time, and the skies were clear; the city and provinces were in abundance of food, and filled with happy, fulfilled citizens.

—7.99.13

These verses describe the coordination of components of life ordinarily considered beyond human control, such as the weather and seasonal variations. Farmers in this age, for example, annually face the seeming vagaries of weather, never knowing if the current year will bring beneficial or disastrous environmental conditions for their crops. Maharishi points out that when the sunshine, rain, and seasons come and go without reference to the needs of society it is because the environment subsists in a state of imbalance, in which there is a lack of coordination among the various separate elements.[90] He emphasizes, however, that these seemingly separate entities can be properly coordinated by re-establishing balance.

The possibility of restoring Nature's balance is in itself an astonishing concept. Maharishi emphasizes, however, that the environment can indeed be influenced by human beings, for its basis is, as we've seen, the same field of Natural Law that is the simplest form of human awareness. His commentary begins with the experience of the unified field of pure consciousness during the Transcendental Meditation program:

> When the awareness expands it does not become fragmented. Instead it becomes more and more coherent. That means that the extremities of infinity are brought inwards, to togetherness. The unboundedness of life is brought into one complete, unchanging wholeness. In this togetherness is the power of invincibility. When an infinite number of small and separate channels of creativity are put together in one whole, creativity is infinite.[91]

Maharishi often compares the mind to a wave on the ocean as an analogy to describe the process of transcending. Just as a wave settles down to assume the status of the entire ocean, the mind settles during the Transcendental Meditation technique and identifies itself with its simplest state, pure self-referral consciousness.[92] This analogy reveals several characteristics of self-referral consciousness, but it particularly underscores its status as a field of Unity, the unbounded totality of all separate parts. On this level of Unity, Maharishi notes, all of the various elements of Nature are naturally coordinated, a concept he calls "infinite correlation":

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[90]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Enlightenment and Invincibility*, p. 183.
[91]Ibid., pp. 182–183.
[92]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Science of Being*, p. 31.

> Infinite correlation means perfect communication. In other words, each element is related with the other so intimately, that it is the other. That is the wealth of the wholeness of awareness which unifies all surface differences at the source.[93]

By enlivening the quality of infinite correlation in individual awareness, it is simultaneously enlivened in every part of collective life:

> Through the Transcendental Meditation technique what happens is that the brain becomes more coherent in its functioning—the different parts of the brain begin to function respecting one another. On the collective level communication becomes smooth and fruitful among the various parts that build up a nation, as well as among the various elements that make up the parts.[94]

Here Maharishi makes clear that national life includes much more than just the lives of the citizens. Creating coherence in the collective consciousness not only creates balance in the functioning of the sun, wind, and rain, but also in every part of a nation. Hence, the key to creating more orderly and coherent functioning among all of the parts of the environment is to enliven the quality of infinite correlation in the collective consciousness.

The verses cited above accentuate the balanced state of life in Ayodhyā, where food was plentiful and beauty was everywhere. We see from Maharishi's analysis of environmental balance a theoretical framework that places Vālmīki's descriptions in a thoroughly practical context. In the case of Ayodhyā, balance was created in national consciousness through the presence of Rām, the total potential of Natural Law. And we see from Maharishi's exposition on the relationship between individual life, collective life, and the environment how this ideal—a mistake-free life in perfect accord with Natural Law—is a practical reality, obtainable through the implementation of the technologies of consciousness, particularly the group practice of the Transcendental Meditation Sidhi program.

Conclusion

This paper has examined key verses from the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇ in the light of the principles of Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology. It has demonstrated how Maharishi Vedic Science enables a reader to gain a deeper appreciation of the role of *Dharma* in the Rāmāyaṇ. It has cited descriptions of *Dharma* that locate its most fundamental value as the transcendental basis of the entire universe, as well as the inner nature—the Self—of all creatures. It has also located evidence that, in the view of the Rāmāyaṇ, the key to living a life in accord with *Dharma* is not just to look toward social norms and conventions, but to develop the total potential of life, and thereby spontaneously act in accord with Natural Law. Although there are numerous discussions of specific behaviors throughout the text, we have seen that the wise attended to their own enlightenment in order to live in accord with *Dharma*.

This paper has further examined Maharishi's description of Rām as the embodiment of Natural Law, and found evidence throughout the Rāmāyaṇ that indeed Rām is fully awake self-referral consciousness, the administrator of the universe, the embodiment of *Dharma*.

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[93]Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Enlightenment and Invincibility*, p. 183.
[94]Ibid., p. 184.

Selected passages portray Rām as capable of creating, maintaining, and dissolving the entire universe; others characterize him as the essence of *Dharma*, from whom all *Dharmas* (the individual Laws of Nature) emerge. Moreover, we have seen Rām's rule as the basis for many years of ideal life, in which every individual lived a fulfilled and prosperous existence.

In conclusion we may reflect on the more profound understanding of the Rāmāyaṇ that Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology has afforded us. Without the knowledge of how individual and collective life can be unfolded, it is not surprising that modern scholars see descriptions of life in Ayodhyā as fantastic. A world where the beauty and order of Nature always flourishes, where fruits and flowers are readily available, where the rains come on time, and where famine and hardship are non-existent, is difficult for the modern world to imagine. Maharishi, however, takes this description of Ayodhyā from the Rāmāyaṇ as an historical portrayal of ideal life, and offers a compelling supportive system of knowledge. He further explains that the rule of Rām, राम राज Rām Rāj, can be the reality for any nation in any age:

> A ruler of a territory may be anyone in the infinity of time, but if he aligns his awareness with *Purushottam* [Rām, *Brahm*], his administration will inherit the qualities of order, freedom, bliss, and the ability to nourish all.
>
> Such an Administration is called *Rām Rāj*—the rule of Rām—the administration of the ruler Rām, *Purushottam* Rām.[95]

Maharishi has offered to the world a time-tested and scientifically validated technology that can create a civilization on par with ancient Ayodhyā. While many scientific studies uphold Maharishi's comments, the ancient literature of the Vedic Tradition provides even more support. Maharishi Vedic Science, modern science, and the texts of the ancient Vedic Literature have all located a similar conclusion: that a perfect life in complete accord with Natural Law—Heaven on Earth—is indeed possible for every individual and every society. It is now up to the leaders of this generation to answer Maharishi's call and quickly bring the world to a new civilization based on the infinite possibilities inherent in the very nature of life.

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